

This Week in Congress

May 28, 2007

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." Memorial Day is an occasion to pay special tribute to the brave military men and women who died while serving our country. I am in Ellinwood today speaking at the community Memorial Day Celebration. I hope all Kansans enjoy this special day and take time to thank a veteran for their service. I hope you find this newsletter useful.

Congress Approves Disaster Assistance for Agriculture

After working for nearly two years, my number one priority for agriculture in 2007 is finally law. This week, Congress passed and the President signed legislation providing agriculture disaster assistance for Kansas farmers and ranchers. It will cover crop losses for years 2005 and 2006, as well as for crops planted through February 28, 2007.

Kansas farmers and ranchers have recently had to deal with the worst of Mother Nature. From multiple years of drought to this year's winter storm and livestock losses and from the hard April freeze to recent tornadoes, floods and hail, Kansans have seen it all. Absent some form of help from the federal government, some farmers and ranchers in Kansas would be out of business before Congress even writes the new farm bill.

It has been an uphill battle for our Kansas farmers and ranchers and I am pleased that relief is now on the way. While this is good news and will provide much needed assistance, our results were limited due to budgetary constraints and producers will only be compensated for a portion of losses in one of the three years. Similar versions of disaster assistance legislation had previously passed the House, but this bill is the first the President has agreed to. Farmers and ranchers should visit their local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office to find out what steps they now need to take.

Congress Approves Funding for Greensburg, U.S. House Recognizes Community

Also included in the legislation providing disaster assistance for Kansas farmers and ranchers was \$40 million in disaster relief funding for Greensburg and other Kansas counties recovering from severe storms that swept through our state earlier this month. The funding is designated for recovery efforts in Greensburg and Kiowa County, as well as other counties that have been declared federal disaster areas by the President.

The House also passed a resolution this week that I introduced with members of the Kansas delegation expressing the support of the House for the community of Greensburg. Although Kansans are accustomed to tornadoes, I have never seen destruction such as this in one community. Yet, despite the devastation, Kansans are cleaning up and rebuilding. The passage of this legislation shows that Kansans are not alone in their efforts. [Click here](#) to watch my speech to the House.

On Sunday, I was in Greensburg with my daughters Kelsey and Alex to attend church service at Greensburg United Methodist Church led by the Reverend Gene McIntosh. It was great to join residents of Greensburg for worship and to see how the community is working to bring life back to normal.

Opposing the Immigration Legislation being Debated in the U.S. Senate

Like many Kansans, I continue to remain concerned about illegal immigration and the effects it has on communities in our state. While our immigration process is broken and needs dramatic overhaul, the legislation currently being debated in the Senate is not the answer. The Senate proposal is public policy at its worst and only exacerbates the problem. I oppose the Senate legislation. The first priority must be to restore the integrity of our borders. Without secure borders, the laws dealing with citizenship and worker permits are irrelevant. In addition to protecting the border, we also need a fair and efficient immigration agency that encourages compliance with our laws so that those who wish to come to the United States legally are able

to do so in a timely and appropriate manner.

Introducing Bill to Open Land to Hunters, Provide Additional Income to Farmers

This week, I introduced legislation in the House to provide incentives to farmers and ranchers who voluntarily open their land to hunting, fishing and other wildlife-related activities. Senator Pat Roberts joined me in introducing the same bill in the Senate. This legislation, commonly known as "Open Fields," would direct the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to provide federal funding to those states with existing programs that encourage private landowners - particularly farmers and ranchers - to open their property for hunting, fishing and other outdoor recreational activities. The modest payments are designed to be a financial boost to rural America.

Reduced access to hunting ground is threatening the future of the sport and the dollars it brings to rural America. This legislation will help continue our nation's outdoor heritage, boost rural economies and provide additional income to our farmers and ranchers.

House Passes Legislation to Provide Chiropractic Health Care Services to Veterans

I am pleased to share that on May 23, the House passed legislation I sponsored, H.R. 1470, to make chiropractic care available at all 155 major medical centers of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). In recent years, I have worked through my position on the House Veterans' Affairs Committee to support legislation to establish chiropractic positions within the VA health care system. As a result, chiropractic care is currently available at 30 VA facilities across the country.

After several years of neglect, this is a positive step to improving veterans' care. But while some veterans have now gained access to a chiropractor, I am concerned that many veterans have problems accessing these services at VA facilities without a doctor on staff. This is especially troubling because a recent VA study found that back pain is a common ailment of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans seeking VA treatment. Chiropractic care has proven an effective therapy to treat these problems, and I am pleased that with the passage of H.R. 1470, this specialty care will now be available to all veterans.

[Click here](#) to watch my speech to the U.S. House of Representatives.

House Rejects Proposals to Limit Grassroots Communication

Earlier this year, as the House prepared to consider lobbying reform legislation, I organized an

effort to convince the Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee to oppose adding any provisions to the bill that would make it more difficult for grassroots organizations to contact elected officials. I was pleased this week that when the House passed lobbying reform legislation, the proposed restrictions were not part of the bill.

The First Amendment rights of Americans to freely petition, call or visit with their elected representative and encourage others to do the same is essential to democracy. Thanks in large part to citizen efforts, grassroots organizations will be able to continue educating and informing the public about important issues in Congress.

Beginning to Draft the 2007 Farm Bill

After a year of hearings, the House Agriculture Committee began work on the 2007 Farm Bill this week. On Tuesday, I joined members of the Subcommittee on Conservation, Credit, Energy and Research to draft this section of the farm bill. I offered two amendments during the committee meeting. The first amendment would allow crop production and grazing on Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) land where the purpose of the CREP land is to retire water rights. The second amendment would allow the use of new Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contracts to be utilized for cellulosic ethanol feed stock. Both amendments will be considered further when the full committee meets.

New Veterans Medical Clinic Coming to Hutchinson

I received good news this week that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will open a new community-based outpatient clinic (CBOC) in Hutchinson. The clinic - which is expected to open in about 10 months - will bring VA health care services closer to veterans living in south central Kansas.

I have been working with VA officials in Kansas and Washington, D.C. to make this clinic a reality and am pleased the VA's approval of the clinic will ensure Hutchinson-area veterans have access to the medical care they deserve. I especially appreciate the support of Tom Sanders, Director of the VA Medical Center in Wichita, for establishing the Hutchinson CBOC.

Speaking about the Fate of Crop Insurance in the Next Farm Bill

On Monday, I spoke at the Program Integrity Conference in Overland Park. The program was a two day seminar for the crop insurance industry to discuss better techniques for controlling waste, fraud and abuse within crop insurance programs. I spoke to the group about the role of Congress in making available tools to help USDA and the industry. I also talked about the fate of crop insurance in the next farm bill.

Taking Kansans' Calls on Smoky Hills Public Television

On Friday, I took calls from Kansans during a live call-in show for Smoky Hills Public Television in Bunker Hill. This show is a recurring event for me, during which I discuss current events and legislative issues with Kansans as well as hear their concerns. The show reinforced what I hear from Kansans as I travel around the state. The issues of immigration, high energy costs and education affect us all. I take my responsibility as a U.S. Congressman and public servant very seriously, and I will continue working hard on all of these issues. Thanks to Dr. Richard Heil from Fort Hays State University who moderated the show and for all the Kansans that called in and watched on television.

Veterans Invited to Attend Forum on Health Care and Benefits

This coming Wednesday on May 30, I will be in McPherson to host a forum for veterans to discuss health care and benefits provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Tom Sanders, Director for the Robert J. Dole VA Medical Center, and Daniel Umlauf, Director for the Robert J. Dole VA Regional Office, will be joining me to hear the thoughts and concerns of veterans.

Kansas veterans and their families will be able to meet face-to-face with VA officials to ask questions and share their comments and concerns. Members of my staff will also be on hand to assist veterans. I welcome all area veterans, as well as other members of the public to attend from 3:30 to 5:00 p.m. at VFW Post 2715, 120 S. Taft Street.

Agriculture Committee Coming to Kansas

The House Agriculture Subcommittee on General Farm Commodities and Risk Management will hold a hearing in Salina on Tuesday, June 5 to discuss the state of agriculture in Kansas. As the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee, I am pleased the other committee members will have an opportunity to hear from Kansas farmers and ranchers about the agriculture condition in our state. The hearing will begin at 9:00 a.m. on the campus of K-State at Salina.

In the Office

Wendy Webb of Stillwell was in with Parents As Teachers to discuss the positive results of military families who utilize the Heroes at Home program, which provides parent education and family support. Hailey Hutchinson of Goddard and Sandy Pickert, Tami and Dusty Gates, Erin Hays, Rebecca Morton, Esther Bruce and Jerrica Scott of Wichita were in with Pure and Simple Abstinence Education to advocate for abstinence education programs. Emporia State University President Michael Lane and his wife Peggy were in along with Judith Heasley, President of the Emporia State Foundation, for a courtesy visit.

In representing the University of Kansas was Dean Gail Agrawal of Lawrence to highlight the School of Law's long term plans to increase competitiveness. Bill Miller of Council Grove and

Ron Dunbar of Richmond were in with Frontier Farm Credit to talk about the progression of the farm bill debate and what they would like to see included in the upcoming reauthorization. Kenny and Sue Kreissler of Olathe and Steve Barnhart of Wichita were in with the Kansas Rural Letter Carriers' Association to tell me about the U.S. Postal Service's contract delivery service.

Levita Rohlman of Dodge City was in with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Migration and Refugee Services to advocate for making changes to the admission rules for refugees. Candy Bahner of Belvue and Dave Sanderson of Salina were in to visit about the importance of Medicare patients having access to physical therapists. Kyle Hawk of McPherson, Gray Schlappe of Garden City, DeAnn Hill and Angie Bennett of Baxter Springs, Jim Clark of Lawrence, Tony Scott of Topeka and Dan Deines of Manhattan were in with the Kansas Society of CPA's to talk about patents on tax strategies.

Aaron and Buzz Walker of Pratt were in with American Standard Roofing to discuss the rebuilding of Greensburg, specifically building permit fees and the Federal Emergency Management Agency contractor list. Karyn Page of Wichita was in with the World Trade Center in Kansas to discuss the organization's recent activities and new projects. Joe and Ellen Farrell of Hill City and Craig, MaDonna and Dustin Reiter of Beloit were in Washington, D.C. on a family vacation and stopped in to visit. Monte, Tara and Ethan Wiley of Colby also stopped by to visit.

Several Kansans stopped by my Washington, D.C., office this week for a tour of the United States Capitol, including Michael and Peggy Lane and Judith Heasley of Emporia. In from Hays were Lisa Colwell and Wallace and Karen Curry with their children, Madeline and Ashley. Lori Elpers and her daughters, Anne and Renee of Cheney and Linda Billips of Bogue were also in.

Very truly yours,

Jerry